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"Iconographs of power or tools of diplomacy? Ottoman *fethnames*"

Claire Norton

Abstract

Historians of Christian European diplomacy have tended to approach Ottoman diplomatic practice from a rather Eurocentric perspective in that they presuppose initial Ottoman non-involvement in the development of the modern diplomatic system followed by a reluctant adoption of it when faced with a period of economic, military and political decline. In this article I read two *fethnames* [victory missives] sent to the Queen of England, Elizabeth I to celebrate the Ottoman capture of Nagykanizsa (Kanije) castle in 1600 as a means by which the Ottoman state both performed and legitimized Ottoman sovereignty, yet also provided an opportunity for political or diplomatic negotiation.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire; diplomacy; *fethnames*; non-Eurocentric history; Queen Elizabeth I; Nagykanizsa Castle

Within the courtyard were the Turk's dwarfs and dumbmen [...] the Grand Seignior, who sat on a Chair of State, appareled in a gown of cloth of silver. The floor under his feet [...] was covered with a carpet of green satin, embroidered with silver, orient pearls, and great turquoises. [...] None were in the room with him, but a Pasha who stood next to the wall over against him, hanging down his head, and looking submissively upon the ground, as all his subjects do in his presence. The Ambassador thus, betwixt 2 who stood at the door, being led in, either of them taking an arm, kissed his hand; and so backward, with his face to the Turk, they brought him near unto the door again; where he stood until they had likewise done with all his Gentlemen. Which ended, the Ambassador, according as is the custom when any Present is delivered, made his 3 demands, such as he thought most expedient for Her Majesty's honour, and the peaceable trade of our nation into his dominions. Hereupon he answered, in one word: *Nolo*; which is; in Turkish, as much as It shall be done! For it is not the manner of the Turkish Emperor familiarly to confer with any Christian Ambassador, but he appoints his Vizier, in his person, to grant their demands if they are to his liking.¹

Continuous diplomacy, invented in Renaissance Italy to gratify the demands of the city-state system [...] was diffused in the sixteenth century through central and western Europe where the emerging nation-states were forging a continent-wide state system. [...] The Ottoman Empire was the first non-Christian country to participate in

¹ Richard Wragge, *A description of a voyage to Constantinople and Syria*, from Richard Hakluyt, *The principall Navigations, Voyages, traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 1598, vol.2 303-7 reprinted in *Early Modern Tales of Orient: a critical anthology*, ed. Kenneth Parker (London, 1999), 54-60; 57.

the European state system and the first unconditionally to accept its form of diplomacy.²

Introduction

The two quotations at the beginning of this article exemplify a dominant scholarly perception of early modern Ottoman diplomatic practice among non-Ottoman specialists. The former presents an image of Ottoman disinterested arrogance and their preference for dramatic ceremonial performances designed more for affect than serious negotiation. While the latter, illustrating a far broader Eurocentric approach to Ottoman history, presupposes both an initial non-involvement by the Ottomans in the development of the modern diplomatic system and then their eventual passive adoption of it. Until recently, scholarship on early modern diplomacy, particularly the development of modern 'western' diplomatic practices and concepts, has generally situated it in the context of internal interrelations between fifteenth-century Italian states, before its export to other European powers, most notably the French, English and Spanish.³ The possibility that the Ottomans may have played a substantive role in the development of 'this new style of diplomacy' has generally been ignored.⁴ Although Goffman, nearly a decade ago, argued that the system of diplomacy that is often solely associated with the 'west' (including permanent embassies, the ideas of reciprocity and extra-territoriality, and the gathering of intelligence) had its antecedents, if not precedents, in Ottoman interaction with, and accommodation of, foreigners and their settlements in the Ottoman Empire, as van Gelder and Krstić note his work has not really led (until now) to a more sustained challenge to the notion of a unilateral western European origin of 'modern' diplomatic practices.⁵

Indeed it has often been surmised that the Ottomans saw no real reason to engage with 'western' diplomatic practices including participation in multilateral conferences, the development of a professionally trained diplomatic corps, adherence to the principle of reciprocity, the establishment of permanent embassies and the recognition of the equality of sovereignties.⁶ Naff has argued that the Ottomans were

² J.C. Hurewitz, "Ottoman Diplomacy and the European State System," *Middle East Journal* 15 (1961): 141-152, 141.

³ Daniel Goffman, "Negotiating with the Renaissance state: the Ottoman Empire and the new diplomacy," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, eds. Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge, 2007), 61-74, 61-2. Goffman, 61 n.1 cites as the classic study of Renaissance diplomacy Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston, 1955) and argues that although more recent works such as *Politics and Diplomacy in Early modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800*, ed. Daniela Frigo, trans. Adrian Belton (Cambridge, 2000) have refined Mattingly's arguments they have not substantially deviated from them.

⁴ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 61 quoted in Goffman, "Negotiating," 69.

⁵ Goffman, "Negotiating,"; Maartje van Gelder and Tijana Krstić "Introduction: Cross-Confessional Diplomacy and Diplomatic Intermediaries in the Early modern Mediterranean," *Journal of Early Modern History*, 19/2-3 (2015), 102. One of the most notable exceptions being precisely the essays in the recently published special issue of the *Journal of Early Modern History*, 19/2-3 (2015), which call for and produce a reevaluation of the Eurocentric model that ascribes the invention of modern diplomacy to the practices and developments of Christian European states. See also A. Nuri Yurdusev (ed.) *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional?*, ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev (Houndmills, 2004).

⁶ See for example Jeremy Black, *A History of Diplomacy*, (London, 2010) 53-4 and Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, "Ottoman Diplomacy at Karlowitz," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 87/4 (1967):

not interested in concluding reciprocal treaties and agreements, preferring instead to issue unilateral “pronouncements of their will”.⁷ Yet Goffman provides a number of antecedents of reciprocity in an Ottoman context including their insistence on entering reciprocal rights for their merchants into capitulatory agreements signed between European states and the Ottoman Empire which in principle allowed for the settlement of Ottoman subjects in the principle European cities.⁸ De Groot too argues that Ottoman foreign commercial and political relations were conducted on the basis of reciprocity and bilateralism, while Panaite and Skilliter discuss and provide translations of both Ottoman unilateral and bilateral or reciprocal *‘ahdnâme-i hümayûn* - the name used by the Ottoman chancery to describe all agreements by which the Ottoman state regulated international trade, alliances and relations as well as the status of foreigners in the empire.⁹

In a similar manner it has often been repeated that although the Ottomans condescendingly received Christian European ambassadors at the Sublime Porte, they chose not to establish their own permanent resident embassies in European cities until the end of the eighteenth century when, it has been argued, they were forced to do so because of the decline of their empire.¹⁰ The rationale behind this asymmetrical diplomacy and the failure of the Ottomans to more quickly ‘Europeanise’ their diplomatic practices has been explained by non-Ottoman specialists as a result of a number of factors. Primarily it has been argued that the Ottomans were not really interested in diplomatic, or any other form of, interaction with western European states as a result of a misguided religious and cultural chauvinism, combined with a prejudice against, and contempt for all things Christian and European.¹¹ Anderson for example, has asserted that “the weight of Islamic

498-512, 498-99. Yurdusev, “Introduction,” in *Ottoman Diplomacy*, 2 summarizes these supposed unconventional characteristics of Ottoman diplomacy and argues that the articles in *Ottoman Diplomacy* seek to challenge the above view, although they tend to focus on the legal aspects of Ottoman diplomacy.

⁷ Thomas Naff, “Reform and the Conduct of Ottoman Diplomacy in the Reign of Selim III, 1789-1807,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83 (1963): 295-315, 295.

⁸ Goffman “Negotiating,” 73

⁹ Viorel Panaite, “Peace Agreements in Ottoman Legal and Diplomatic View (15th-17th Century),” in *Pax Ottomana in Studies in Memoriam Prof. Dr. Nejat Göyünç*, ed. Kemal Çiçek (Haarlem, Ankara, 2001), 277-307, 284-290; S. Skilliter, *William Harbourn and the Trade with Turkey 1578-1582: A Documentary Study of the First Anglo-Ottoman Relations* (London, 1977). Alexander H. De Groot *The Netherlands and Turkey: Four Hundred Years of Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Relations*, (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2009) 96-97. See also Michael Talbot, “British Diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire during the Long Eighteenth Century,” (Ph.D. Diss., SOAS, 2013) 60 who argues that although reciprocal rights were not explicitly granted in the 1675 British capitulations, they were implied.

¹⁰ For such an argument see Yüksel Söylemez, “The Turks Place in Europe; A Historic, Cultural and Diplomatic Overview,” 5. *Milletlerarası Türkiye Sosyal ve İktisat Tarihi Kongresi. Tebliğler. İstanbul, 21-25 Ağustos 1989* (Ankara, 1990), 681-698, 684-5. For an account of the first permanent Ottoman Embassy in Europe see Mehmed Alaaddin Yalçınkaya, *The First Permanent Ottoman Embassy in Europe: the embassy of Yusuf Agah Efendi to London (1793-1797)* (Istanbul, 2010). The notion of Ottoman ‘decline’ has been problematized by a number of authors including: Cemal Kafadar, “The Question of Ottoman Decline,” *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 4 (1997-1998): 30-71; and D. Quataert, “Ottoman History Writing and Changing Attitudes towards the Notion of ‘Decline’,” *History Compass* 1 (2003): 1-9. A. Nuri Yurdusev, “The Ottoman Attitude toward Diplomacy,” in *Ottoman Diplomacy*, ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev (Houndmills, 2004), 5-35, 30 argues that unilateralism was in the interests of western European states, in effect they did not want permanent Ottoman embassies in western Europe.

¹¹ For examples of such a view of Ottoman diplomatic practice arising from their contempt for European states see Hurewitz, “Ottoman Diplomacy,” 145; Naff, “Reform,” 295-6; Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (London, 1964), 30 and 32. For the claim that the Ottomans were “self-

religious conservatism” precluded the possibility of any developed diplomatic practice by the Ottomans.¹² In religio-legal terms a number of scholars have suggested that as a result of Islamic political theory dividing the world into the *dār al-Islām* [abode of Islam] and the *dār al-Harb* [abode of war] there was, from the perspective of Islamic political entities, no need theoretically for diplomacy between states.¹³ Yet Ottoman scholars, including Goffman and Imber have stressed the flexible system of jurisprudence and latitudinarian politico-administrative structure that the Ottomans evolved through a practice of cultural syncretism and the pragmatic and creative combination and systemization of Islamic law, customary practices and sultanic decree.¹⁴ In particular, Gürkhan has stressed the need to evaluate Ottoman diplomacy through an analysis of vernacular diplomatic practices rather than the rigid theoretical framework prescribed by Islamic law.¹⁵ Other Eurocentric explanations have emphasized Ottoman military dominance up until the end of the sixteenth century as obviating any real need for diplomatic activities or stressed the Ottoman state’s desire to utilize non-reciprocity as a means of projecting their military and political superiority.¹⁶ Lastly, some scholars have connected a supposed lack of interest in commercial activities by the Ottoman state with their absence from the western European diplomatic system, arguing that it was primarily economic factors that motivated many European embassies to Istanbul.¹⁷

Notwithstanding the counter-arguments briefly outlined above, we should, as Constantinou has perceptively noted, be wary of normalizing western European diplomatic praxis as universal, or the embodiment of the essential principles of

satisfied, inward-looking and closed to outside influences” see Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: the classical age 1300-1600* (London, 1994), 52. Claire Norton, “Blurring the Boundaries: Intellectual and Cultural Interactions between the Eastern and Western; Christian and Muslim Worlds,” in *The Renaissance and the Ottoman World*, eds. Anna Contadini and Claire Norton (London, 2013) lists a number of works in n.1 that together with the other articles in the book provide detailed evidence of Ottoman interest in Christian European states and cultures.

¹² M.S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy, 1450-1919* (Harlow, 1993), 70-71 quoted in Talbot, “British Diplomacy,” 22.

¹³ For the argument that Ottoman government practices were governed by the precepts of religious law see Hurewitz, “Ottoman Diplomacy,” 146; see also Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (London, 1982) chs 1, 2, 6 and 8 particularly 171-75, see also his comment that “the Ottoman Empire remained a polity penetrated from its very origins with a sense of mission in the holy war” 29.

¹⁴ Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2002), 72-7; and Colin Imber *Ebu’s-Su’ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition*, (Stanford, 1997), 40-58. Panaite, “Peace Agreements,” 280 also discusses the different means by which peaceful relations could be established between Muslims and non-Muslims in accordance with Islamic law. Specifically the covenant ‘*akd-i zimmet*’ implied a permanent peace which cancelled the theoretical state of war between the *dār al-Islām* and the *dār al-Harb*.

¹⁵ Emrah Safa Gürkhan, “Mediating Boundaries: Mediterranean Go-Betweens and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in Constantinople, 1560-1600,” *Journal of Early Modern History*, 19/2-3 (2015) 107-128, 107.

¹⁶ Söylemez, “The Turks Place in Europe,” 684-5 comments “Until 1683, as the Ottoman state was militarily powerful, it felt no need for diplomacy. [...] The Ottoman resort to diplomacy as a method of self defence was due to the fear of European unity against the Ottomans.” On non-reciprocity as a projection of Ottoman might see Naff, “Reform,” 296; and Hurewitz, “Ottoman Diplomacy,” 146. For a counter-view see n.8 and 9 above particularly the reference to Goffman.

¹⁷ See Hurewitz, “Ottoman Diplomacy,” 146. This idea of Ottoman disinterest in commercial activity has been challenged successfully by numerous Ottoman scholars. For example, see the extensive work of Suraiya Faruqi on Ottoman trade; Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State: the merchants of Genoa and Turkey* (Cambridge, 1999); Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire*. The fact that Ottoman decrees and treatises included reciprocal rights for Ottoman merchants to trade and dwell in European cities also challenges this view, see n.8 and 9 above.

diplomatic engagement, and then using it as the benchmark with which to measure and assess the level of ‘modernization’ or development of other states and cultures.¹⁸ Mattingly’s emphasis on courtly diplomatic engagement by a professional ambassadorial elite as an archetype, a predominantly legalistic understanding of the practice of diplomacy, and a focus on particular types of documents has led to other instances of cross-confessional mediation being disregarded and thus the Ottoman contribution to the development of ‘modern’ diplomatic praxis being overlooked.¹⁹ Universalizing local western European practices leads to an orientalising of Ottoman diplomatic praxis and its positioning as a Eurocentric counterpoint to western European policies and conduct – something exacerbated by situating the explanatory force of Ottoman actions in a combination of un-modern, imperial arrogance and an inward-looking, ‘medieval’ Islam.²⁰ It is such an orientalising tendency that explains why, as in the quotation at the beginning of this article, the ceremonial presentation of foreign ambassadors, their arms pinned to their sides, before a supercilious, impassive, disdainful sultan has been frequently used as a synecdoche for all Ottoman diplomatic engagements with Europeans.²¹ However, Talbot’s distinction between foreign policy as an articulation of a state’s relationship with other states, and diplomacy as a practice of negotiation between individuals, groups and political entities on matters of mutual interest could be helpful in this context.²² Rather than examine Ottoman texts for evidence of how they conform to European diplomatic practices we should instead inquire about the extent to which Ottoman diplomatic practices achieved the aforementioned goals. Did they facilitate the conclusion of commercial, political and military alliances or agreements, resolve conflict, help acquire strategically important information and promote the interests and reputation of the state? In doing so, it might then be demonstrated that the origins of the new diplomatic practice were not to be located solely in western European culture, but arose from a process of diplomatic interaction in which Constantinople was just as an important a location as Venice.²³

In this article I will read two *fethnames* [victory missives] sent to the Queen of England, Elizabeth I to celebrate the Ottoman capture of Nagykanizsa castle in 1600 as a means by which the Ottoman state both performed and legitimized its sovereignty and power, yet also provided an opportunity for political or diplomatic negotiation. In particular, I will draw attention to how the roles of the sultan and the grand vizier were instrumental in conveying, in this context, two distinct diplomatic functions, arguing that while the role of the sultan in this context was primarily,

¹⁸ Costas M. Constantinou, “Diplomacy, grotesque realism, and Ottoman historiography,” *Postcolonial Studies* 3 (2000): 213-226, 216-7.

¹⁹ Natalie Rothman “Afterword: Intermediaries, Mediation, and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in the Early Modern Mediterranean,” *Journal of Early Modern History*, 19/2-3 (2015) 245-259, 246-7.

²⁰ Such explanations simply reiterate the usual Eurocentric assumptions about Afro-Asian states as un-modern and stagnant – see John Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation* (Cambridge, 2004) 8. Naff, “Reform,” 296 describes the Ottoman Empire as being in the early nineteenth century “despite its enduring presence in Europe [...] essentially a medieval Islamic state in objectives, organization and mentality”. Constantinou, “Diplomacy,” 216-7 argues that rather than look for contextual factors that explain Ottoman reluctance to appoint permanent embassies from the fifteenth century onwards, we should instead consider the contextual factors that encouraged western European states to do so.

²¹ For another early modern English description of the reception of an ambassador by the Sultan see William Harbourn, *The voyage of the Susan of London to Constantinople*, in *The Principlall Navigations*, ed. Hakluyt, in *Tales of Orient*, ed. Parker, 51.

²² Talbot, “British Diplomacy,” 20-21.

²³ Van Gelder and Krstić “Introduction,” 102.

although not exclusively, to assert the power and majesty of the empire, the role of the grand vizier was more mediatory and provided an opportunity for relatively informal communication. Through a nuanced reading of a *fethname* as an instance of cross-confessional, non-ambassadorial, diplomatic mediation, rather than as a performance of imperial propagandistic bombast, I provide an insight into multilayered Ottoman diplomatic practices and in doing so broaden our understanding of Ottoman diplomatic agency and contribute to challenging the Eurocentric notion that the Ottomans remained isolated from the development of early modern diplomacy.²⁴

The Nagykanizsa *Fethnames*

Nagykanizsa Castle, located just south of Lake Balaton in today's Hungary was captured from the Habsburgs by the Ottoman army under the personal command of the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha after a three-month siege in 1600. The castle had previously been deemed impregnable due to its location on an island in the middle of the river Berk surrounded by swamp: "it was neither possible to approach near by with trenches, nor was it possible to mine and whatever kind of cannon was fired would sink".²⁵ Thus its capture, together with that of Eger Castle in 1596, represented one of the most significant military victories by the Ottomans against the Habsburgs during the Long War (1593-1606). A fact attested to by the jubilant narration of the siege by a number of Ottoman historians, the dispatch of celebratory *fethnames* [victory missives] to "all sides and borders and to the possessors of provinces and governments" and the appointment of the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha to the position for life.²⁶ Although a new administrative Ottoman province (*eyalet-i Kanije*) was established and despite the propagandistic potential, the capture of the castle did not drastically affect the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier which was essentially stabilized by the treaty of Zsitvatorok that concluded the war in 1606.

Between 26 January and 4 February 1601 CE., approximately three months after the Ottoman capture of Nagykanizsa castle from the Habsburgs, two *fethnames* were sent simultaneously to Queen Elizabeth I in the name of the Ottoman sultan and grand vizier.²⁷ They both bear the same date and place of composition and were

²⁴ For readings of *fethnames* as propagandistic bombast see for example, G.L. Lewis, "The Utility of Ottoman Fethnames," in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. B. Lewis and P.M. Holt (London, 1962), 192-196; Jan Schmidt, "The Egri-Campaign of 1596; Military History and the Problem of Sources," in *Habsburgisch-osmanische Beziehungen - Relations habsbourg-ottomanes* Wien, 26.-30. September 1983: *Colloque sous le patronage du Comité international des études pre-ottomanes et ottomans*, ed. Andreas Tietze (Vienna, 1985), 125-144, 129. Christine Woodhead, "Fetihname," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd (online) edition offers a useful overview of the genre and notes that *fethnames* could have diplomatic as well as propagandistic functions.

²⁵ Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke-i Katib Çelebi* vols 1-2. (Istanbul: Ceride-i Havadis Matbaası: 1286 (1869-70) 137-8.

²⁶ For a description of the capture of the castle by Ottoman eyewitness historians see Hasan Beyzade, *Telhis-i Taç-al Tevarih*, Arkeoloji Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, No.234 fols. 464r-68v, quotation is at 468a; Abdülkadir Topçularkatibi *Tevarih-i âl-i Osman* VNB:Mxt.130 fols. 128v-40r; Ibrahim Peçevi. *Tarih-i Peçevi* vol. 2. Istanbul: 1283 (1866-7) 232-35. Both Hasan Beyzade and Katib Çelebi who was writing later in the seventeenth century mention Ibrahim Pasha being confirmed for life in his position as grand vizier, Hasan Beyzade fol.468b and Katib Çelebi 142. *Fethnames* celebrating the capture of both Eger and Nagykanizsa castles were sent to Queen Elizabeth I as I discuss below.

²⁷ According to Mordtmann, I. H. and V. L. Ménage "Hasan Beyzade" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 3. ed. by Peri J. Bearman, et al. (Leiden 1960-2000 2nd ed.) 248-9 there are five extant Nagykanizsa *fethnames* written by Hasan Beyzade. Three of these are described as being in a *mecmu'a*

written in Ottoman Turkish by Ottoman historian and administrator Hasan Beyzade.²⁸ There exist no contemporaneous English translations of these two documents although there is a French translation of the *fethname* sent in the name of the grand vizier listed in the Calendar of State Paper in the National Archives.²⁹ This was not the first news that the English had received of the Ottoman victory. Their ambassador Henry Lello mentioned the capture of the castle in a letter sent from Constantinople dated 30 November 1600.³⁰ Two *fethnames* celebrating the same victory were also sent to the Doge of Venice, but unfortunately these have not been able to be located in the Venetian archives since the beginning of the 1950s.³¹ Extant Ottoman-language *fethnames* that were actually sent to foreign rulers are not numerous. To date I have identified three in the National Archives in London and Pedani has documented six extant copies of Ottoman-language *fethnames* and two in Greek which were sent to the Doge, as well as Italian translations of seven others in the Venetian State Archives.³²

As noted in the text of the two extant English *fethnames*, they were delivered, and presumably translated and interpreted, by the Ottoman envoy and physician Barthélemy de Cœur.³³ Albert Lefavre notes that Barthélemy de Cœur was a

[compendium of writings] previously in the possession of Cavid Baysun, but I have been unable to locate them. The other two are those described here.

²⁸ That in the name of the grand vizier is London: National Archives, SP.102/61 fols 87-8; that in the name of the sultan is London: National Archives, SP 102/4 21. These will from now on be referred to in the main text as the grand vizierial *fethname* and sultanic *fethname* respectively. Hasan Beyzade, *Telhis-i Tacü't-tevarih*, Istanbul: Arkeoloji Müzesi, no.234 fol.468 for a reference to his writing the *fethnames*.

²⁹ London: National Archives, SP97/4 fols 119-120. J. M. Stein, "A Letter to Queen Elizabeth I from the Grand Vezir as a Source for the Study of Ottoman Diplomacy," in *Archivum Ottomanicum* 11 (1986), 231-247 provides a translation into English of the grand vizierial *fethname*. An English translation of the sultanic *fethname* can be found in Claire Norton, "Plural Pasts: The Role of Function and Audience in the Creation of Meaning in Ottoman and Modern Turkish Accounts of the Sieges of Nagykanizsa," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Birmingham, 2005) 579-584.

³⁰ NA SP 97/4 fols 111-112. The summary on the outside of the letter (fol. 112b) also notes the "taking of Canisia". See also NA SP 97/4 fols 113-114 in which the ambassador notes the dispatch of an army in the "winter [for] the recovery of canisia". The following year there is a further reference in the ambassadorial correspondence to the subsequent Ottoman defence of the castle NA SP 97/4 fol.148.

³¹ Summaries of the two Venetian *fethnames* exist in Lajos Fekete, "A velencei állami levéltár magyar vonatkozású fethnáméi." in *Levéltári közlemények*, ed. Lajos Fekete (Mar-Dec. 1926), 139-157, 154-7. M.P. Pedani, "Ottoman *Fethnames*. The Imperial Letters Announcing a Victory," *Tarih incelemeleri dergisi* 13 (1998): 181-192, 185 also references them. Fekete provides a summary in Hungarian of the Sultanic *fethname* and from a brief consideration of an Italian translation of Fekete's summary, kindly provided by Dr Pedani, the *fethname* presented to the Doge seems remarkably similar to that given to Queen Elizabeth and it might not therefore be unreasonable to assume that the two *fethnames* were sent to Venice for the same reason as two were sent to England. I thank Dr Pedani for drawing my attention to this information.

³² All were sent to Queen Elizabeth I. Two are the Nagykanizsa *fethnames* discussed here, the other celebrates the capture of Eger castle, London: The National Archives, SP 102/4 11. Maria Pia Pedani, "Ottoman *Fethnames*. The Imperial Letters Announcing a Victory," *Tarih incelemeleri dergisi* [Ege Üniversitesi-Izmir] 13 (1998), 181-192. Of the Ottoman language *fethnames*, one celebrates the capture of Eger, Venice: State Archive, Lettere e scritture turchesche. f. 5, cc. 187; one celebrates Süleyman's capture of Tabriz, Venice: State Archive, Documenti turchi n.640; three celebrate victories in Hungary in 1541 and 1543 (two victories), Venice: State Archive, Documenti turchi n. 463, 507, and 509; and one an earlier victory in Persia, Venice: State Archive, Documenti turchi n.342. See also the catalogue compiled by Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, "I "Documenti turchi" dell'Archivio di Stato di Venezia. Inventario della miscellanea, con l'edizione dei registi di A. Bombaci. Roma 1994 (Pubblicazioni degli archivi di Stato. Strumenti 122).

³³ NA SP 102/4 21 lines: 38 and 39.

‘renegade’ Frenchman and that he was sent by the sultan to the French King in March 1601 to protest about the Duke of Mercoeur commanding the Habsburg army against the Ottomans.³⁴ A letter from the English ambassador Lello dated January 1601 notes the dispatch by the Ottomans of a doctor to Venice and France.³⁵ It is reasonable to speculate that de Cœur also delivered the Nagykanizsa *fethnames* to the Doge of Venice and that perhaps it is possible that similar *fethnames* were also sent to the French King.³⁶ Barthélemy de Cœur provides an excellent example of what Rothman has termed a trans-imperial subject and Gürkhan discusses the role such subjects played as informal diplomatic actors.³⁷

Fethnames are relatively short, highly stylized, official documents that were sent to Ottoman governors, vassals and foreign rulers to celebrate Ottoman conquests.³⁸ They were also read aloud in public spaces in Ottoman towns and cities, and included in Ottoman histories and collections of *inşa* [cultural writings].³⁹ However, such *fethnames* have rarely been the subject of academic inquiry. Despite being official state documents, and in the case of the Nagykanizsa *fethnames* being composed and written by a respected Ottoman historian-administrator who was an eyewitness to events, scholars of Ottoman history have tended to perceive *fethnames* as less than reliable historical sources because their “literary and/or religious-political character” tends “to blur or distort the facts”; they are not considered to be “impartial factual accounts”, but are seen as “halfway between political propaganda and heroic saga.”⁴⁰ When they have been used as sources it has largely been for the documentary evidence they can provide of various battles: who did what to whom and when. With the exception of a single article by Stein there has been no study of the diplomatic functions that *fethnames* may have had.⁴¹ Moreover, in the context of the

³⁴ Albert Lefèvre *Les Magyars pendant la domination ottomane en Hongrie: 1526-1722* vol.1 (Paris: 1902) 255 and n.2

³⁵ NA SP 97/4 fols 154-155b for reference see 155a. The doctor is referred to as “d. hert” an Anglicised version of de Cœur perhaps?

³⁶ My preliminary enquiries have not found any references to such documents in the French archives.

³⁷ Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, (Ithaca, 2012); Gürkhan, “Mediating Boundaries”.

³⁸ The term *fethname* was, and still is, commonly used to describe two different genres or categories of written text. The first describes literary works, which celebrate Ottoman victories in general terms and were often written many years after the events they describe, whereas the second describes the more official victory letters described above. A.S. Levend, *Gazavat-nameler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey’in Gazavat-namesi* (Ankara, 1956) provides a list of many extant *fethnames* of both genres although as I note above there are very few extant *fethnames* that were actually dispatched to foreign rulers.

³⁹ The first few lines of the Eger *fethname* inscribed in Mustafa Efendi Selaniki, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, ed. M. İpşirli, vol. 2, (Istanbul, 1989), 643-648, 643-644, and the version of the Eger *fethname* in the *inşa* collection in Berlin: Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, ms.or.fol.3332 fols 187b-189a, fol. 187b, iterate the Sultan’s command to ensure the document is read aloud and news of the victory made public. See also Suraiya Faroqi, “Ottoman Victory Celebrations,” unpublished manuscript. I thank the author for kindly sending me a copy of this article.

⁴⁰ Christine Woodhead, “Ottoman Historiography on the Hungarian Campaigns: 1596 the Eger *fethnamesi*,” in *Proceedings of the VIIIth Conference of the Comité des Études Ottomanes et Pré-Ottomanes (CIÉPO)*, at Pécs, Hungary, 1986 (Ankara, 1994), 469-77, 469; Jan Schmidt, “The Egri-Campaign of 1596,” 129; Bernard Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilisation of the Ottoman Empire* (Oklahoma, 1963), 166.

⁴¹ Stein, “A Letter to Queen Elizabeth I,” analyses the grand vizierial *fethname* in terms of its potential diplomatic function, arguing that it is “an instrument in the Ottoman effort to establish a friendship of alliance with England” and was “principally [...] intended to serve the ends of Ottoman diplomacy” 234, but he does not consider it to be an example of a *fethname* and instead categorises it as a letter. G.L. Lewis “The Utility of Ottoman *Fethnames*” in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. B. Lewis and P.M. Holt (London, 1962) 192-196, 196 argues that although one could not seek in *fethnames*

Nagykanizsa *fethname* scholars have not asked why two, virtually identical missives were dispatched to celebrate the successful Ottoman capture of the castle, nor what explains the few textual differences between the two documents. Indeed, in general, little, if any attention has been paid to why *fethnames* are reinscribed in different textual contexts. Variations are invariably glossed over and once an *ur-text* has been decided upon other recessions are effectively ignored.⁴²

Rather than read the Nagykanizsa *fethnames* sent to Queen Elizabeth I simply for documentary evidence about the siege and gloss over the fact that two were sent, I focus on how the framing of the *fethnames*, the textual variations, reception context, and the expectations of the intended audience indicate that the texts were intended to be read in different ways and served distinct politico-diplomatic functions. The dispatch of two *fethnames* was a deliberate undertaking and although the actual audience of both documents was physically identical, the implied audience was different: it was assumed that Queen Elizabeth I would read the *fethnames* with two different sets of expectations as regards their function and meanings. While the sultanic *fethname* was intended to be read as an ‘iconograph of power’ within a discourse of imperial sovereignty and imagined its audience as a sovereign leader, the grand vizierial *fethname* was intended to be read within a discourse of diplomatic correspondence and was addressed to an implied audience perceived in more friendly terms, as a peer, someone with whom one could negotiate on matters of mutual interest.⁴³

My approach in this regard is indebted to the work of Suraiya Faroqhi who has noted that sultanic rescripts in the Venetian archives are often accompanied by letters written in the name of the grand vizier. While the sultanic rescripts are designed to instill awe in the recipient and to issue commands, the grand vizierial correspondence is more conciliatory, diplomatic and pragmatic. She argues that these grand vizierial letters played a role in informal inter-governmental negotiations and can therefore provide an insight into the bargaining process that existed between states.⁴⁴ I argue that the Ottomans intended something similar with the unique dispatch of two *fethnames* celebrating the capture of Nagykanizsa castle.

The Nagykanizsa sultanic *fethname* is an impressive document, a ritual performance of Ottoman power designed to intimidate and instill awe in equal measure. It was intended to be read within a discourse of imperial sovereignty, an

“accurate reports of events” they could provide “clues to the *persona* of the Ottoman Empire [...] and a picture of how the Empire wanted to be regarded by its friends and enemies.”

⁴² For example, Schmidt, “The Egri-Campaign of 1596,” 141, n.20 argues that the different inscriptions of *fethnames* celebrating a particular victory are copies of a single original and that they are “basically the same text” despite their “sometimes considerable differences.” G.L. Lewis, “Fathname,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, eds. P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth et al. 2nd ed. vol.2 (Leiden, 1960-2000): 839-40, 840 similarly argues that there exists one true originary *fethname* for each victory, the discovery of which would be extremely useful for Ottoman military history, while the value of later variations [deviations?] is mainly literary. In contrast I discuss the various re-inscriptions of the Eger *fethname* in the context of Ottoman imaginations of self and other in Claire Norton, “The Lords of Lewdness: imagining the ‘other’ in Ottoman *fethnames* [victory missives]” in Robert Born and Andreas Puth, (eds), *Osmanischer Orient und Ostmitteleuropa* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 2014) 281-299

⁴³ The phrase is adapted from one used by Gülrü Necipoğlu, “Süleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Habsburg-Papal Rivalry,” in *Süleyman the Second and his Time*, eds. Halil İnalcık and Cemal Kafadar (Istanbul, 1993), 163-194, 170.

⁴⁴ Suraiya Faroqhi, “Ottoman Views on Corsairs and Piracy in the Adriatic,” in *The Kapudan Pasha, His Office and His Domain*, ed. E. Zachariadou (Rethymnon, 2002), 357-371, 360-1.

assumption reinforced by the ‘codicological aesthetics’ of the text.⁴⁵ It is a three-foot long scroll embossed with gold with an ornate *tuğra* (stylized signature of the sultan) that would have been wrapped in silk and placed in a satin purse. The physicality of the document would have created a particular horizon of expectations as well as a degree of commensurability in its intended audience: it clearly signals that it is a letter from the ruler of a prosperous and powerful empire addressed to another well-respected sovereign. This latter point would have been reconfirmed by the introductory remarks that describe Elizabeth I as “the select among modest Christian women, the pre-eminent of those honoured in the whole body of Christians, the one who puts to rights the affairs of the commonwealth of Christian nations, the one who trails the skirts of pomp and stateliness”.⁴⁶ The main narrative of the letter consists of two sections. The first gives the reason for the campaign, eulogises the grand vizier, and refers to the previous year’s rout of the enemy and the capture of towns and castles. The second section focuses on the current year’s campaign, specifically the Ottoman siege of the Habsburg-held Nagykanizsa castle. It describes the number of enemy soldiers, and relates the battle against the Habsburg relief army, their subsequent flight, and the eventual surrender of the supposedly impregnable fortress.

The grand vizierial *fethname* is physically smaller and less ornate. It is however, textually largely identical, especially the second section describing the actual capture of the castle. So why were two *fethnames* sent to Queen Elizabeth? If we understand the sole function of a *fethname* as being one of propaganda, to simply glorify the Ottoman Empire, to intimidate, or convey information about a victory to a recipient, then it makes no sense to send two *fethnames*. However, if we view *fethnames* as having potentially multiple functions, and if we view one of the purposes of diplomacy as being the process of negotiation and mediation on subjects of mutual concern between peoples and states, then I argue we can make sense of the dispatch of two Nagykanizsa *fethnames* and read the grand vizierial *fethname* as an instance of unofficial diplomatic correspondence.

Textual Variation

The various possible functions of *fethnames* outlined above are reflected in the numerous small and, at first sight, insignificant textual differences between the two documents. For example, following an identical *salutio* in both documents the sultanic *fethname* then commands “When the exalted imperial seal arrives let it be known that”.⁴⁷ In contrast the grand vizierial *fethname* has “after prayers suitable to friendship and congruent with the sultanic affection it is communicated in a friendly manner that”.⁴⁸ Similarly, the sultanic *fethname* concludes with a command, “you must be fearful that, Bartholomew De Coeur, [...] is forwarding our felicitous imperial letter and when the one skilled in medicine arrives you should cause this felicitous conquest, this prosperity filled conquest, to be known and believed by the people in your provinces and our other friends.”⁴⁹ It then continues that the proclamation of the Ottoman victory at Nagykanizsa by the Queen to her subjects will be “the cause of their gladness, rejoicing, cheerfulness and

⁴⁵ Ralph Hanna, “Producing Manuscripts and Editions,” in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, eds. A. J. Minnis and Charlotte Brewer (Cambridge, 1992), 109-30, 129.

⁴⁶ London: NA SP 102/4 21 line 1. All translations unless otherwise stated are my own.

⁴⁷ NA SP 102/4 21, line 2

⁴⁸ NA SP 102/61 fols 87-8 line 2

⁴⁹ NA SP 102/4 21 lines: 38 and 39

happiness.”⁵⁰ Such language and sentiment is an example of Ottoman imperial rhetoric and is typical of sultanic missives. In contrast, the grand vizierial *fethname* ends in a far more cordial manner with a reference to the enduring, long-term friendship between the countries and monarchs, “From the old days until this present moment as a consequence of your faithfulness to the threshold of the sublime [the Sultan’s court] whose mark is felicity, and of your well wishing [to] this region and your long friendliness and loving affection the events of this side, at length, have been communicated to the side of your noble self”.⁵¹ Overall the tone of the grand vizierial *fethname* presupposes a different relationship between the implied audience and author: one of greater intimacy and cordiality, which in turn alters the expectations of the audience. In addition, the concluding paragraph intimates the ‘real’ reason for the communication: the Ottoman state is requesting or hoping that the English will continue to fight the Habsburgs, or will at least refrain from concluding an alliance with them. This is something I will return to below.

The first section of the grand vizierial *fethname* also contains a number of textual variations that work to foster an atmosphere of on-going friendship and cooperation between the English and the Ottomans. For example, in the grand vizierial *fethname*, but not in the sultanic *fethname*, the English ambassador Henry Lello, is eulogised and described as “the model of the leaders of the Christian nation” and as a “faithful friend and well-wisher of all of our affairs” who “sends letters in a friendly manner to this region” which are “full of fidelity and loyalty” thereby foregrounding the cordial and personal relationship between the two countries.⁵² This ongoing, recursive diplomatic communication and correspondence between the English and the Ottomans is again signalled in the reference to English letters that “continually come to one from your region”.⁵³ This example of “meta-pragmatic discourse” works to articulate ideologies of commensurability that envisage both states as possessing similar political systems, practices of governance and shared diplomatic practices.⁵⁴ It therefore acts as a performative process of self-validation; authorizing and authenticating both parties through the process of textual exchange and communication.

The grand vizierial *fethname* also includes a reference to the unexpected Anglo-Dutch victory over the Habsburgs at Nieuport in the Netherlands in 1600.⁵⁵ The absence of a reference to this victory in the sultanic *fethname* can be explained in terms of the genre protocols associated with sultanic missives. It is not commensurate with a performance of sovereignty and demonstration of power to praise another’s victory. In contrast, I suggest that because the grand vizierial *fethname* is written within a more personal, informal, mediatorial frame, mention of the battle serves a number of functions. Firstly, it demonstrates Ottoman awareness of current English affairs and a concern with English victories, something that again helps to foster a propitiatory tone. More importantly, it foregrounds similarities between the Ottomans and the English: they both have a common enemy in the

⁵⁰ NA SP 102/4 21 line:40.

⁵¹ NA SP 102/61 fols 87-8, lines:33-4

⁵² NA SP 102/61 fols 87-8, lines:2-3

⁵³ NA SP 102/61 fols 87-8, line:3

⁵⁴ Rothman, “Afterword” discusses meta-pragmatic discourse in the context of Ottoman diplomacy 251-3, as well as Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s notion of commensurability as articulated in *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia*, (Cambridge: Mass., 2012) xiv, cited in Rothman 250. The references to correspondence also reinforce the friendly tone of the grand vizierial missive.

⁵⁵ NA SP 102/61 fols 87-8, lines:4-5

Habsburgs. As the grand vizierial *fethname* says, "both on your side and in our region, honour like this has occurred. Always may our enemies not be free from being conquered and broken in this manner and our friends not be lacking victory and triumph."⁵⁶ It also further encourages the English to continue to fight against the Habsburgs by requesting that "let it not cease from being that you are always victorious and dominant over your enemies and those who are from your opposing side are inverted in this manner".⁵⁷

In contrast, in the sultanial *fethname* there is an oblique reference to the attempt to negotiate a peace treaty at Esztergom the previous year, which is absent from the grand vizierial *fethname*.⁵⁸ Its inclusion seems designed to aid the Ottoman representation of themselves as a peace-loving, law and treaty-abiding state who do not wish to attack their Christian Habsburg neighbours, but are forced to do so because of the latter's unreasonableness and aggression. A similar reference in the sultanial *fethname* to the ostensible reason behind the war - that the sultan was forced to "draw the sword of revenge against the vile enemy of religion" – is also absent from the grand vizierial *fethname*.⁵⁹ Presumably both references are absent from the grand vizierial *fethname* because they are only pertinent within the discourse of official diplomatic protocol: in the sultanial *fethname* the implied author is depicting the Ottoman Empire as sublime and puissant, but also just and fair. References to Ottoman attempts to negotiate a peace and explanations of their actions in terms of taking revenge, rather than instigating conflict help to present such an image. In the grand vizierial *fethname* there is no need to present the campaign as fair or just. The implied author and audience are interacting on a different level, within a more collaborative and reciprocal frame. Moreover, references to attempted peace treaties would conflict with the key function of the document, which is to remind the English of the futility and inappropriateness of alliances made with the Habsburgs.

One last subtle difference in the second part of the narrative that describes the actual siege of Nagykanizsa further illustrates how these two virtually identical documents were intended to serve distinct purposes and facilitate the creation of different potential meanings. Both *fethnames* mention the defection of 'Frenk' [Frank] soldiers from the Habsburg-held Papa garrison, their subsequent absorption into the Ottoman army and the role they played in the siege and capture of Nagykanizsa castle.⁶⁰ The entire section concerning the capture of the castle is identical in both *fethnames* except for the second mention of the Frenk soldiers. In the sultanial *fethname* we have "the *beylerbeyis* [governors] of Rumeli and Bosnia with the Frenk soldiers who had come from Papa conquered the castle of Lak and Bulundvar" whereas in the grand vizierial *fethname* the order is reversed and it is "The Frenk soldiers and the *beylerbeyis* [...]".⁶¹ This may of course simply be a scribal accident, but it could also be explained in terms of the different functions of the two documents. The sultanial *fethname* is a performance of Ottoman sovereignty so state officials are mentioned first. The grand vizierial *fethname* is, in contrast,

⁵⁶ NA SP 102/61 fols 87-8, line:32-3

⁵⁷ NA SP 102/61 fols 87-8 lines:6-7

⁵⁸ NA SP 102/4 21 lines:6-7.

⁵⁹ NA SP 102/4 21, lines 3-4

⁶⁰ On the *frenk* soldiers from Papa see Caroline Finkel, "French Mercenaries in the Habsburg-Ottoman War of 1583-1606: The Desertion of the Papa Garrison to the Ottomans in 1600," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55/3, (1992) 451-471, 465-8. Referents for the term *frenk* include, but are not always restricted to French men, sometimes it can refer to western European Christians in general.

⁶¹ NA SP 102/4 21, line:36 and SP.102/61 fols 87-8, line:31.

focused on negotiating a closer alliance with the English. By mentioning the contribution of the Frenks, it clearly foregrounds not only the possibility, but also the desirability of Ottoman-Christian European alliances.

Why Two Fethnames?

There is still one question that needs to be answered: why were two *fethnames* sent in 1601 when in 1596 only one *fethname*, in the name of the sultan, was sent to celebrate the capture of Eger castle?⁶² The dispatch of the grand vizierial *fethname* can be explicated, I believe, with reference to the politico-military context against which the two conquests occurred and the letters were sent. In 1596, the English, French and Dutch were all at war with the Habsburgs: a situation that benefited the Ottomans as it not only forestalled any chance of a potential pan-European, anti-Ottoman crusade, but it also detracted the Spanish Habsburgs from assisting the Austrian Habsburgs in their war with the Ottomans. It therefore, probably did not seem necessary to the Ottomans to send an additional, more intercessory letter designed to counsel or solicit a continuation of English hostility towards the Habsburgs. However, by 1601 the Spanish Habsburgs had negotiated a peace treaty with the French (May 1598) and in 1600 had conducted, ultimately inconclusive, negotiations with the English.⁶³ Such a shift in western European inter-state relations may well have begun to cause the Ottomans some concern and encouraged the dispatch of the grand vizierial *fethname*. It explains the amicable tone, and emphasis in the grand vizierial *fethname* on the longevity of the Anglo-Ottoman relationship and their shared successes against the Habsburgs.⁶⁴

This, however, begs the question as to why it was necessary to send the grand vizierial *fethname*; why could the grand vizier not just write directly to the English Queen and court? A later source demonstrates that there were specific protocols involved in inter-state correspondence that may have precluded such a course of action. Correspondence from the early seventeenth century between the grand vizier and the sultan implies that despite the Ottoman desire for information concerning the new King of England, James I (1603-1625) and the status of the country - specifically whether it had been invaded by the Spanish Habsburgs - they were deliberately waiting for the new English King to formally request shelter and offer his service to the threshold of felicity.⁶⁵ This determination not to commence any new communication until the protocols of accession had been adhered to resulted in the Ottomans refusing to send a new 'trade' document to the English king and their dispatch of a copy of the old one previously sent to Queen Elizabeth I. The codes of diplomatic practice could not be violated. However, the capture of Nagykanizsa castle and the Ottoman diplomatic ritual of the *fethname* offered a potential parallel space for negotiation. The dispatch of the grand vizierial *fethname* was a means of

⁶² NA SP 102/4 11

⁶³ Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I. War and Politics 1588-1603* (New Jersey, 1992).

⁶⁴ There is also a noticeable shift in the terms used to define self and other, and the *casus belli* given for the conflict between the Eger and Nagykanizsa *fethnames*, something that I discuss in more detail in Claire Norton "The Lords of Lewdness: imagining the 'other' in Ottoman *fethnames* [victory missives]," in *Osmanischer Orient und Ostmitteleuropa*, eds. Robert Born and Andreas Puth, (Stuttgart, 2014), 281-299.

⁶⁵ C. Orhonlu, *Osmanlı Tarihine âid Belgeler: Telhisler (1597-1607)* (Istanbul, 1970), 76-7. The *telhis* [correspondence between the grand vizier and the sultan] is not dated, but all the *telhis* in this book date from between 1597-1607. Reference to the new English king, James I means that the *telhis* is from 1603 at the earliest.

obviating the codes of official diplomatic practice and provided an ideal opportunity for the Ottomans to raise shared concerns and to re-confirm English opposition to the Habsburgs without broaching protocol.

It would be easy to read the sultanic *fethname* as another example of arrogant, oriental, asymmetrical Ottoman diplomacy intended simply to intimidate and proclaim the might of the empire. A more nuanced approach that does not interpret the rituals surrounding the reception of ambassadors at the Sublime Porte described at the beginning of this article as a synecdoche of Ottoman diplomacy permits a reading of the grand vizierial *fethname* as an example of rational, Ottoman diplomatic negotiation. A textual mediation, that while it does not fit into the predominant model of diplomacy as performed by elite, professional ambassadors through formal embassies as articulated by Mattingly, is an example of communication between participants who shared practices of sovereignty and diplomacy and who recognized each other's organizational similarities, political systems and conventions.⁶⁶ One way that this commensurability was substantiated and sustained was through the performance of diplomatic rituals through embassies, ad-hoc and non-diplomatic intermediaries and a variety of textual exchanges.⁶⁷ Such a reading of the *fethnames* therefore challenges the Eurocentric depiction by Hurewitz and others of the Ottomans as being disdainfully outside of western European diplomatic *praxis* until, as a response to the economic, political and military decline of their empire, they were reluctantly forced into the system in the eighteenth century. It moves away from an orientalist or Eurocentric paradigm based on a dichotomous opposition between Europe and the rest of the world and provides an insight into how the Ottomans both imagined and attempted to redraw relationships across confessional and political boundaries.

⁶⁶ Joshua M. White, "Fetva Diplomacy: The Ottoman Şeyhülislam as Trans-Imperial Intermediary," *Journal of Early Modern History*, 19/2-3 (2015) 199-221 provides an excellent exploration of another Ottoman textual genre not commonly associated with diplomacy being used for such a purpose.

⁶⁷ See Rothman "Afterword," 250-1.